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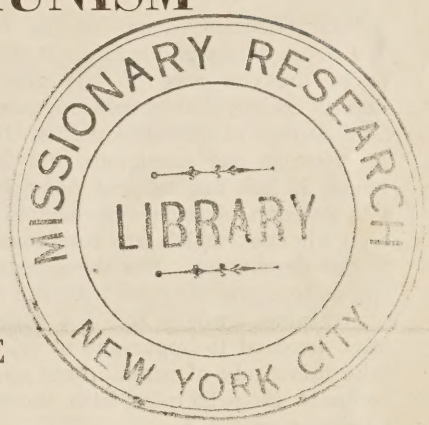
CHRISTIANITY and COMMUNISM
an ANALYSIS



Prepared by the Faculty of
GARRETT BIBLICAL INSTITUTE
Evanston, Illinois

This statement is the outgrowth of months of study and discussion by members of the faculty in an effort to speak affirmatively and constructively concerning the issues presented to our society by communism. While laymen representing widely different backgrounds and points of view assisted by giving their suggestions and criticisms, the faculty members accept responsibility for the statement as published. They hope that it will provide a basis for stimulating and enlightening discussions among Christian people.

Copies may be secured by writing to the chairman of the committee, Professor Murray H. Leiffer, Garrett Biblical Institute, Evanston, Illinois.

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CHRISTIANITY and COMMUNISM

An analysis by members of the faculty of Garrett Biblical Institute

COMMUNISM is one of the most acute issues of our day. It claims to be the one way of salvation for human society but stands opposed to Christianity at essential points. Here in America the suspicions and fears which it has engendered have been the occasion of serious threats to the civil liberties which are fundamental to our democracy. For these reasons we, as teachers charged with the task of training leaders for the church, have deemed it important to undertake this study of communism and to compare its principles with those of Christianity.

By Christianity we mean not only that way of faith and life which we find in Jesus Christ, but also the significance of this in and for society today. By communism we mean not only the theory proposed by Marx and his followers, but the expression of this in the Soviet Union, its satellites, and the Communist parties around the world, in their policies and practices.

These two ways have some points in common. Communism asserts the equality of all men irrespective of race or color. From its beginning Christianity has asserted that God made of one blood all men to dwell on the face of the whole earth. Communism is concerned with economic welfare and the accessibility of the goods of life to all men. Christ came to preach good tidings to the poor, release for the captives, liberty for the oppressed, and the coming of a new world of justice and righteousness.

Christendom has failed to embody in its institutions and practice the full gospel of Christ, and this has afforded an opportunity to communism to make its appeal. Christians are called upon not only to set forth the principles of Christ but also to apply them to the whole social life of man.

★ A Christian Analysis of Communism

Although Christianity and communism have some goals in common, there are radical differences alike in aims and in methods of their attainment. (The following are representative and not all-inclusive.)

1. *As to criticisms of the existing order*

COMMUNISM CONDEMNS

a) *Private ownership of property,* except for a few types of consumer goods, asserting that private property results in the exploitation of the masses (the proletariat or "working class").

b) *Inequalities in opportunity and power,* resulting from capitalism, which must be removed by concentrating economic control in the state.

c) *Emphasis on individualism and unrestrained self-expression.* All should work for the promotion of "the cause," according to a plan.

d) *Middle-class bourgeois morality* as expressed in traditional standards of marriage and the family. These are sanctioned only in so far as they fulfill a function for the state.

CHRISTIANITY CONDEMNS

Selfish use of property, as all property, private and public, is a trust from God. "The earth is the Lord's." (For communism the crucial matter is the *ownership* of property; for Christianity, its *use.*)

Concentration of power, in the state or other agency, which endangers the liberties of the people. It also condemns the inequitable distribution and the irresponsible use of power.

Depersonalizing of the individual through the control of large impersonal organizations or the state. It also condemns emphasis on selfish individualism.

Attitudes of irreverence and irresponsibility toward sex and family life. (For example, for the Christian, marriage vows are not a mere legal contract, but also a pledge of love and loyalty made before God.)

2. *As to the character of a just social order*

COMMUNISM PROCLAIMS

a) *The supremacy of the proletariat,* in which the individual's significance derives from his membership in the class.

b) *A classless society,* which is to be secured by eliminating all but one class.

c) *Economic security* as the supreme concern (secured, however, by the sacrifice of human freedoms, as we understand that term).

d) *No racial discrimination* (but other types of discrimination are deliberately used).

CHRISTIANITY PROCLAIMS

Supremacy of the person, who is conceived of as a child of God and an object of inherent worth.

The brotherhood of man, in which all individuals and groups work for the common good.

Security with freedom. Economic security, while imperative, is not the sole or even the supreme good. Genuine security requires intelligent self-restraint and uncoerced concern for the general welfare.

Equality before God, which means all men of all races and classes are entitled to justice and freedom from discrimination.

3. *As to the methods of effecting social change*

COMMUNISM INVOLVES

a) *Dictatorship of the proletariat,* actually exercised by small disciplined groups. Beyond the proletariat there is no higher authority.

b) *Elimination of dissenting minorities* as a threat to the new order.

c) *Violent revolution,* as the indispensable way for the redistribution of political and economic power.

CHRISTIANITY INVOLVES

Government founded on the consent of the governed, who are children of God and therefore worthy to have a voice in their own rule. All political power is a trust from God.

Protection of dissenting minorities in the exercise of constitutional freedoms of assembly, speech and petition.

Peaceful change, through education, persuasion and reconciliation. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

d) *The doctrine that the end justifies the means:* any means are justified that secure the desired ends as determined by the aims of the Party.

Christian character development, which cannot be achieved by means that deny or are in conflict with the ends sought.

4. *As to the meaning of life*

COMMUNISM TEACHES

a) *Atheism.* Religion is a product of fear and a flight into fantasy. "Religion is the opiate of the people," used as a control device by capitalism.

b) *Social derivation of all values.* The only significant standards and values are those which arise out of society; these are derived from the interaction of economic forces.

c) *A utopian view of history.* Human existence will find fulfillment on earth in a progressively improved social order, through the operation of economic laws and by means of the class struggle.

d) *The subordination of individual personality.* The interests of the individual must be subordinate to the communist system (and must be sacrificed if necessary as a means to victory in the class struggle).

e) *The restricted nature of community.* Fellowship, though potentially world-wide, is earth-bound and is restricted to those holding the communist philosophy.

CHRISTIANITY TEACHES

Theism. An all-righteous, all-loving God is the source of man's existence and his only final deliverance from sin and evil. Service to Him is man's primary motivation in continuing personal and social reconstruction of life.

All moral and spiritual values founded in the character of God. The good life is achieved through responsible obedience to His will.

The Kingdom of God. The meaning of human existence must be understood in terms not only of the processes of history but also of God's purposes for man's life now and in eternity. If men will obey the will of God, justice and peace will increasingly prevail in history.

The supreme worth and dignity of persons. Every individual is of infinite worth in the eyes of God and must always be regarded by his fellows not as a means to an end, but as an end in himself.

A universal and eternal fellowship. Men are made by God for fellowship with himself and with one another, in time and eternity, within a community transcending all barriers of nation, race, class or political opinion.

★ Christian Principles for Action

We believe that the church should:

1. Continue to declare that above all human authorities there is the supreme authority of the just, righteous, and loving will of God. This declaration requires the honest recognition that no existing economic or political system can be identified with the perfect will of God; that all are limited and warped by human ignorance, pride and selfishness. The will of the majority is not necessarily the will of God.

2. Teach that all men share a common humanity and have essentially the same physical and spiritual needs.

3. Voice continuous and creative criticism of social institutions and practices which violate the requirements of the Kingdom of God: love, justice, and universal brotherhood.

4. Practice a ministry of reconciliation, both within and outside the church, between conflicting groups of men, whether they be divided by race, creed, political belief, nationality or economic status.

These principles need to be applied to the whole range of life—political, economic and social—including the life of the organized church. Christian men will differ as to the specific procedures by which these principles are to be implemented. However, the following commend themselves to us as appropriate actions.

a) Resist all individual and group practices which restrict or threaten constitutional human rights. This involves the condemnation of every type of totalitarianism, whether it be political, economic or religious.

b) Support efforts to extend civil liberties to individuals or minority groups now denied them.

c) Provide more adequate and equitable educational facilities and services throughout the country.

d) Develop a broad program of health protection, to secure reasonably satisfactory medical care for all, regardless of location or economic condition.

e) Work for a comprehensive housing program, realistically planned and executed so as to make possible wholesome home life.

f) Advocate opportunity for regular work for persons desiring it without regard to race, religion or national origin, with provision for adequate compensation and protection against occupational hazards, illness, and involuntary unemployment, and with assurance that such employment shall promote the dignity of human labor.

g) Warn against the threat of mounting militarization in America and elsewhere; advocate world disarmament; strengthen the civil functions of government.

h) Insist upon the larger and more efficient use of United States government funds to reconstruct the peacetime economies of the nations.

i) Advocate government by law on a world basis and support constructive movements in that direction.

j) Encourage and support private humanitarian agencies such as the world service organizations of the churches, CARE, and Citizens' Committee on Displaced Persons, for whose programs there is abundant need beyond all the government agencies can perform.

k) Appeal directly through press, radio, and, where possible, personal contacts to Russians and other peoples, showing our Christian concern for the establishment of peace with justice throughout the world.

l) Work toward the achievement of these objectives through local voluntary organizations—economic, educational, political and religious—and counsel others to do likewise.

Communism is not simply an economic program. It is a total theory of life, which is radically in conflict with Christianity, especially in its methods, but also in its goals and its attitudes toward persons. Communism itself recognizes this in its opposition to religion and the church. Our failure to apply consistently the basic Christian principles of justice and freedom and equal opportunity for all, our failure to rectify the common wrongs of exploitation and the common ills of poverty—this is what has given opportunity for the specious appeals not only of communism but also of fascism. As long as there is poverty, insecurity, fear, oppression, there will be a fruitful field for such false messiahs as have led peoples astray in this last generation. No campaign against communism can succeed unless it also attacks these evils and proceeds toward the realization of a just and Christian society.

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